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Viewing cable 07PORTAUPRINCE1148, THE POLITICAL BASIS FOR VIOLENCE IN GONAIVES -

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Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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#07PORTAUPRINCE1148.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07PORTAUPRINCE1148	2007-06-29 12:33	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Port Au Prince

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.haiti-liberte.com/archives/volume4-51/vendeur%20de%20drogue.asp>

<http://www.haiti-liberte.com/archives/volume4-51/Mafia%20boss.asp>

VZCZCXRO9585
PP RUEHQ
DE RUEHPU #1148/01 1801233
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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6415
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 001148

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SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
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SUBJECT: THE POLITICAL BASIS FOR VIOLENCE IN GONAIVES -
PART 2 OF 3

REF: PORT-AU-PRINCE 966

PORT AU PR 00001148 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JANET A. SANDERSON, REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

1. (C) Summary. Like their local political leaders, civil society leaders in Gonaives believe that insecurity in Gonaives results from the political rivalry between Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis and Senator Youri Latortue. According to post's interlocutors, gang leaders, who are linked to Senator Youri Latortue, prey on the local populace and foment unrest to discredit the government. At the same time, residents resent the government and the Haitian police (HNP) for their inability to deliver services and protect the citizenry. While leaders express hope that recent changes in

HNP leadership will improve the security climate, they report that many residents believe that the re-establishment of the army would be more effective in combating gangs and restoring order. End summary.

12. (C) Poloff on May 30-31 conducted nine interviews in Gonaives, of which two were with politicians, two with law enforcement, and five with civil society. This second cable reports on the interviews with Catholic XXXXXXXXXXXX, the national XXXXXXXXXXXX leader XXXXXXXXXXXX, civil society XXXXXXXXXXXX, XXXXXXXXXXXX proprietor XXXXXXXXXXXX, and XXXXXXXXXXXX.

13. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX representative organization, claimed that Gonaives was dangerous because the authorities tolerated the gangs that were aligned with Latortue's political party, The Artibonite in Action (LAA). Because of the authorities' acquiescence, no one protected members of civil society who spoke out against the gangs. For example, XXXXXXXXXXXX asserted that gang members on April 13 at 3:00 AM murdered Zantray's former secretary general, Edouard Johnson. The HNP arrested the alleged perpetrator only under pressure from Zantray. Separately, XXXXXXXXXXXX claimed that before the change in leadership at the HNP, Senator Latortue would go to the local police station at midnight and secure the release of arrested gang members. When asked how he obtained this information, he replied that HNP officers told him. He allowed that the HNP in Gonaives changed for the better under its new leadership that arrived in May.

14. (C) Catholic XXXXXXXXXXXX noted that until the recent HNP crackdown on gangs, Gonaives was the victim of a 'culture of impunity.' Since the GoH did not have effective law enforcement in the city, residents felt unprotected from the gangs if they were to speak out against them. Everyone understood that the gangs in Raboteau did not make idle threats, as the murder of journalist Alix Joseph reinforced (Note: Joseph, a noted grass-roots democracy activist, reportedly received death threats from gang members after speaking out against gang violence. See refel.) XXXXXXXXXXXX, who denounced the violence, placed security guards in his residential compound, even though he did not feel directly threatened by the gangs. While XXXXXXXXXXXX assiduously avoided any mention of politicians or political factions, he opined that residents were asking for the return of the army because in the past, the army 'kept the situation under control.'

15. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX believed that Gonaives suffered from insecurity 'that was a form of opposition to the GoH' caused by politically ambitious persons, 'some of whom should be behind bars, but are seeking office. You know who I am talking about.' XXXXXXXXXXXX claimed that Latortue was not as popular as some may believe, but that because of his long established ties with the gangs, Latortue is part of a strong minority able to disrupt events that support Prime Minister Alexis, as seen when demonstrators threw rocks at Alexis during Judge Hugues St. Pierre's funeral. XXXXXXXXXXXX claimed to know definitely that Latortue is stockpiling arms and that the local longshoremen were aligned with Latortue. (Comment: Longshoremen initially made up the bulk of the notorious 'Cannibal Army' gang in Gonaives. End comment.) Conversely, according to XXXXXXXXXXXX, though Latortue's popularity may be exaggerated, many Gonaives residents oppose President Rene Preval because they view his administration as a continuation of Lavalas rule.

16. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX, a local businessman and XXXXXXXXXXXX also maintained that the insecurity in Gonaives is politically driven by the Alexis-Latortue rivalry. XXXXXXXXXXXX believes that because Aristide's return to Haiti is more likely to occur with a Democratic U.S. presidential victory in 2008, Latortue is determined to provide an inhospitable environment for Aristide in the event that he returns with the ascension of a Democrat to the White House. XXXXXXXXXXXX is unclear where Alexis stands in this scenario. He believes that Latortue is continually adding to his base of supporters by manipulating the students with his call for the re-establishment of the army and the establishment of a university in Gonaives.

17. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX, who assumed the directorship of the School of XXXXXXXXXXXX after XXXXXXXXXXXX's death, claimed that the basis for Gonaives' insecurity was political, but declined to elaborate further. He noted that the students were especially upset about the manner in which journalist Alix Joseph was murdered. Jean-Louis did not know if Latortue was providing financial assistance to the students, but he claimed that the students would rather live in a police state than with insecurity. Consequently, the students who understand that the constitution explicitly calls for an army and police, believe that an HNP under the army would have eliminated the gangs long ago.

18. (C) Comment. According to post's civil society interlocutors, residents of Gonaives see themselves as helpless bystanders in a partisan political war conducted by armed factions, and civil society leaders are unable to address their concerns through the democratic process. Though residents credit MINUSTAH with some improvement in the overall climate, many believe that the re-establishment of

the army is the only real solution to gang impunity. Both anti-gang and pro-army sentiment seems to contribute to Senator Latortue's political strength, even if many identify him as the gang's political patron. Whether or not Latortue enjoys genuine popularity among Gonaives residents, he has become a formidable adversary of Alexis and the government because he actively recruits allies and champions popular positions, actions which residents of Gonaives do not see the GoH doing. Latortue is re-branding himself as a man of action, which resonates with the populace.

SANDERSON